



1999 Statewide Tourism "Bed Tax" Collections Up

Montana's 1999 tourism "bed tax" collections were up 3% statewide and some tourism regions and communities reported even greater growth, according to the latest report from the Montana Department of Revenue. In that report, statewide "bed tax" collections for 1999 rose to record \$10,545,551.

"We are pleased to see a continuous and steady growth in the majority of Montana's tourism regions."

Among the state's official "bed tax" tourism organizations, four of the six tourism regions and six of the nine reporting communities saw collection increases.

Yellowstone Country reported a 7% increase followed by Glacier Country with a 3% increase in collections. Custer and Gold West were up 1%. Russell Country remained even, with Missouri River Country reporting an 8% decrease.

"We are pleased to see a continuous and steady growth in the majority of Montana's tourism regions, but we do understand some of the challenges Missouri River Country faces and we will continue to promote the region's tourism potential," says Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn. However, Cohn notes, both the Fort Union Trading Post and Fort Peck Lake located in Missouri River Country saw substantial visitor increases in 1999.

West Yellowstone led the nine reporting communities with a 12% growth in tourism "bed tax" collections. Whitefish was up 5% and Helena, Kalispell and Missoula reported a 4% collection increase. Billings grew by

3%, while Great Falls fell by 1% and Bozeman and Butte reported 2% declines.

Cohn explains that while numbers in Bozeman, Butte and Great Falls have shown a slight decline, there may still be some unrecorded payments that have not been allocated throughout 1999. We will continue to monitor the status of these collections.

Webdate

It is said that nothing remains constant, but change itself. That is especially true when it comes to Travel Montana's consumer website, www.visitmt.com. The webmasters are constantly updating and improving the site for our visitors. The newest features on our home page include a conveniently located database search engine, a direct link to our Lewis and Clark Bicentennial site, and a link that allows our visitors to book their Montana room reservations on-line.

Travel Montana has also added more content and in-depth information to its hiking, backpacking and biking sections. "It's our goal to continue upgrading and adding content to all of our sites so our visitors have the tools they need to explore the state," says Matthew Cohn.

Cohn adds that from January 1 through March 31, 2000, the website hosted 307,108 users. This is a 27 percent increase from the same time period last year.

Put Yourself in Montana

Travel Montana's "Warm Season" marketing campaign continues to heat up. The following are some of our hottest projects.

Direct Mail

Travel Montana mailed out over 80,000 direct mail postcards in April to targeted individuals who in 1999 had requested information from Travel Montana from the following categories: photography, those who had visited Montana, history and golf. The golf postcard was designed in partnership with Sun Mountain Sports in Missoula. The piece has a web address directing



people to visit Travel Montana's site and to enter to win some golf equipment. The web address is <http://www.visitmt.com/golf>. Sun Mountain has donated 20 items (including golf bags, speed carts, jackets, shirts, etc.) to be given away at the end of the promotion.

Montanakids Promotion

Because of the success of last year's Montanakids.com "Treasure Hunt" promotion, Travel Montana is once again working with our tourism partners to offer one lucky person a chance, via the internet, to win a trip for four to the state. This promotion went live on March 1, 2000. In just one month, 53,871 users logged on to the site. This is compared to 19,968 users in the same time period in 1999. The promotion ends May 31, 2000.

Television Spot

Our new TV spot began airing the third week in March on such networks as the Discovery Channel, the Travel Channel, Lifetime, Animal Planet and The Nashville Network. In addition to the new creative, we also posted our web address on the spot. The phenomenal success of the project has brought many compliments by e-mail and phone.

M2K Governor's Conference Wind Down

Thanks to the 486 folks who participated in the 26th Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation. We hope the conference was useful and enjoyable for all. The 27th Annual Conference is scheduled for Helena's Cavanaugh's Colonial Hotel, March 26-27, 2001.

Electronic versions of the ITRR research presentations, the Montana Image Study, Matthew Cohn's Travel Montana presentation and the Montana Department of Transportation's Scenic Highway Program update are posted on Travel Montana's Intranet site: www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/conference. You will find these in the Speakers & Presentations section. We will continue to gather other electronic format conference presentations for posting on the site.

If you would like a Governor's Conference notebook with materials from each break out session and a list of Montana tourism industry contacts and facts, they are available for cost and mailing from Travel Montana for \$25. To get a copy call Travel Montana's Victor Bjornberg or Joanne Gilbert at (406) 444-2654 or e-mail victor@visitmt.com.

Lights, Camera, Action - Film Office News

The Film "Big Eden" premiered at the closing night of the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival on April 18. Shot in north-western Montana last fall, it featured the area's amazing scenery and a number of Montana actors.

The Montana premiere has not been scheduled yet. "The Flying Dutchman" shot in the Darby and Hamilton areas recently wrapped its production. The film stars Eric Roberts and Rod Steiger. Congratulations and thanks to all the talented crew and companies who worked on both of these projects.



Making Moves at Travel Montana

Travel Montana says goodbye to Consumer Marketing Manager, Suzanne Elfstrom. Suzanne is leaving after seven years with Travel Montana to pursue a career with Mercury Advertising in Bozeman. Thanks Suzanne for all of your hard work and dedication to the program. Sarah Lawlor, Travel's MTRI Coordinator has been selected to take over Suzanne's position, while webstaffer, Corrie Hahn, has been named the Electronic

Marketing Manager, replacing Shawn Peterson. Good luck Suzanne, Sarah and Corrie in your new posts.



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Calendar of Events

May

- 7-13 National Tourism Week
- 13-17 TIA's International Pow Wow Trade Show, Dallas, TX
- 16-21 Historic Lodging Media Tour (Russell Country)
- 18 MTRI Focus Team Meeting - Helena
- 24 Regions and CVB meeting - Helena

June

- 2-8 Idaho/Montana International Fam tour
- 9-13 RMI Round-Up, Spearfish, SD and Cheyenne, WY

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to Travel Montana's Intranet site:
travelmontana.state.mt.us



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